

Animal Health Safeguarding Review Implementation Progress Report May 2004

I. Progress achieved in implementing the review:

Exclusion

- Training course for Russian veterinarians – VS personnel conducted training the week of May 17th for official and university veterinarians in Russia. The training covered basic epidemiology and was sponsored by the US Department of Commerce in coordination with APHIS, International Services. Building animal health capacity in other countries is encouraged in Safeguarding Review recommendation #48 as a means of protecting the US from foreign animal diseases.

Surveillance

- Biosecurity for the Birds program launched – USDA launched a national awareness campaign to educate non-commercial bird owners about avian health and poultry diseases. The *Biosecurity for the Birds* campaign is designed to inform people who raise their own poultry or who own exotic birds about the clinical signs associated with diseases such as avian influenza and exotic Newcastle disease. The campaign includes an expanded emergency poultry surveillance and outreach program. The program also includes information on biosecurity. Educating animal owners about clinical signs and encouraging early reporting will increase early identification of emerging and foreign animal disease events called for in Safeguarding Review recommendations #7 and 8.
- Surveillance system developments – Numerous steps were taken in May toward the development of a national surveillance system. The Surveillance Steering Committee held a conference call on May 11th. The Committee discussed the surveillance system strategic plan and prioritization of activities of the National Surveillance Unit. A survey to assess perceptions of VS staff regarding the development of an integrated and coordinated national animal health surveillance system has been drafted. Through this survey, input will be gathered which will be utilized to craft a common vision about surveillance. Implementation of this survey is targeted for July. The services of a media relations specialist have been acquired by VS to assist in crafting and presenting the common vision for surveillance within VS. A critical evaluation of databases available for use for national animal health surveillance purposes has been initiated. This evaluation will determine the potential for VS' current surveillance and program disease databases to collect and manage national level surveillance data. Safeguarding Review recommendations #s 2, 15, and 16 identify specific steps to be taken to develop a national surveillance system.

Response

- Laboratory emergency response capability – VS provided an update on the National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) to members of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy and officials from the Department of Homeland Security. Progress in assay validation and deployment, the information technology reporting/alert tool, policies, and funding were reviewed. The purpose of the briefing was to ensure integration of the NAHLN goals with overall laboratory emergency response capability. Safeguarding Review recommendation #105 calls for coordinating efforts with other federal and state agencies.
- Numerous emergency preparedness activities at the local level – VS offices throughout the United States continue to report activities being undertaken at the local level to improve emergency preparedness and to develop partnerships. Among the efforts reported in May were: presentations at the Humane Society of the United States National Conference on Animals in Disaster; participation in a tabletop exercise hosted by the Colorado Department of Agriculture; attending *Veterinary Response to a Bioterrorist Attack* training in Mississippi; and co-chairing the Virginia Advisory Committee on Animal Health Emergency Preparedness. Safeguarding Review recommendation #105 calls for coordinating efforts with federal and state agencies, industry, and other organizations.

Laboratory Systems

- NAHLN Steering Committee meeting - On May 19 and 20th, members of the NAHLN Steering Committee met in the Washington, DC area. The Steering Committee meets periodically to continue discussion and movement towards a national laboratory network. Topics discussed at the May 2004 meeting included: definitions, leadership structure, expansion, cooperative agreements, information technology, and strategic vision. Safeguarding Review recommendations 17, 74, 118, and 121 point toward the establishment of a national animal health laboratory system.
- FERN/LRN/NAHLN meeting – VS personnel attended a meeting on May 25th to discuss ways to facilitate cooperation between major laboratory networks for response to emergencies in animal health (NAHLN), public health (Laboratory Response Network (LRN)), and food safety (Food Emergency Response Network (FERN)). The discussions explored ways to cooperate in providing proficiency testing and harmonization of test methods and protocols for agents of common concern to laboratories in the three networks. In attendance at the meeting were representatives from the Centers for Disease Control, Food and Drug Administration, Food Safety and Inspection Service, and Veterinary Services. Safeguarding Review recommendation #118 calls for defining roles and

responsibilities of federal and state laboratories in a national laboratory infrastructure.

- Public Health Information Network meeting – VS personnel attended the 2nd Annual Public Health Information Network Stakeholders Conference in Atlanta Georgia on May 24 – 27th. Discussions at the conference centered on the integration of public health information systems and interactions between the Centers for Disease Control, state public health departments and state public health laboratories. The approach taken by the Public Health Information Network mirrors that taken by VS in developing the NAHLN. Safeguarding Review recommendation ##118 calls for defining roles and responsibilities of federal and state laboratories in a national laboratory infrastructure.

Veterinary Accreditation

- New veterinary accreditation program leadership – Dr. Larry Miller became the new National Veterinary Accreditation Program Manager on May 3rd.
- Accomplishments for the veterinary accreditation program – Progress was achieved in May on a number of National Veterinary Accreditation Program (NVAP) activities. New evaluation forms for the NVAP were tested at core orientations held in Indiana. The Veterinary Accreditation Database Steering Committee held a meeting on May 5 and 6th in Riverdale. Records in the Veterinary Accreditation Database are being updated using the American Veterinary Medical Association's database. The new *Practitioner's Guide for Accredited Veterinarians* has been completed and will be distributed to field offices for review. The final report for the *Comprehensive Assessment of Veterinary Accreditation and Foreign Animal Disease Training at Schools of Veterinary Medicine* was received by VS on May 10th. This report evaluates the current state of veterinary accreditation training and relevant foreign animal disease instruction at each College of Veterinary Medicine and the report's findings will be used by VS to guide future refinements of the NVAP training and foreign animal disease education. Several Safeguarding Review recommendations call for improving the veterinary accreditation program (#s 145, 146, and 147).

II. Implementation activities:

The Exclusion Issue Group has established several subgroups to do additional fact finding for the offshore and land border port action plans the group is drafting. The issue group is holding monthly conference calls and will hold its next in person meeting the week of August 16th in San Francisco.

The National Surveillance System Issue Group met the week of May 10th to continue working on action plans.

The Coordinated Response Issue Group met the week of May 17th to continue working on action plans.

The National Surveillance System, Veterinary Accreditation, Organizational Dynamics, and Information Technology Issue Groups have each submitted draft action plans for review and consideration at the Veterinary Services Management Team meeting in June.

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